The Evocation

Translated by W. L. McPherson

THE chateau, which we reached toward evening, carrying with us our friend Urbain, who had a bullet wound in his breast, had suffered but little from the battle. Some shells had smashed the roofs and damaged the portico—the result of a short but violent encounter in the park and the adjoining woods. Our zouaves had driven out of the building the staff of a German division. But the Bavarians, the night before, had hastily removed all the rich and costly furniture. We wandered through the empty rooms, and finally I gave orders to set up the stretcher in a salon on the first floor.

In the middle of the room—the single piece of furniture left intact by some miracle—stood a piano, a grand piano, isolated in this white silence like a huge sarcophagus in ebony. The brutes had neither carried it away nor demolished it. Seeing it, my heart jumped. I thought of those coffins draped in black which are left in the middle of a room before the body is to be taken away, and I cast a strange glance at poor Lieutenant Urbain, my brother in arms, whom our comrades had deposited in a corner, arranging his improvised couch by the light of a dull lantern. He was livid. His shirt was stained with blood. And I felt myself assailed by a nameless fear as I turned my eyes from the wounded man to the huge instrument in the middle of the room, which looked for all the world like a gloomy, glittering sepulchre.

We seated ourselves at Urbain's bedside—Lieutenant Fleury and myself—resolved to await the arival of the surgeon-major. Fleury was a big fellow, genial and gay. In civil life he was a composer and a pianist of high reputation. At Chateau Thierry, before the departure of our regiment, he delighted our circle by playing the Allied national hymns and all the other martial and patriotic airs which were demanded. For those who loved music he played the classics. But this evening he was as sad as I was, and as harassed and weary; and he walked past the big piano with a look of indifference.

The major finally came, examined our friend at length, and took off and replaced the bandages. Then he shook his head. I understood. He led me aside and told me that there was very little hope, but that he would remain with us, being as well off there as anywhere else.

We were then, the three of us, in that vast room, all white and empty, between an inert, wounded man on the one side and, on the other, that huge, black piano, whose presence there had from the beginning suggested to my imagination something fantastic and fatal.

A certain time passed. We did not sleep, but we remained rigid and stupefied. Suddenly we heard Urbain's voice—a voice transformed and softened, which seemed to come from a distance.

"Are you there, Fleury?"

We were startled. Fleury answered:

"Yes, I am here—with Fresnel and the major. What is it?"

"Fleury," said Urbain, "listen! I wish—I wish that you would go to the piano and play something."

"You are foolish, my dear fellow," replied Fleury, forcing an accent of gayety. "You need to get some sleep. I will play you all the music you want when you are convalescent."

"I shall never be convalescent. Listen to me! And you three, all of you, listen to me! I have a fiancée at home, in Anjou. Her name is Fanny. She is pretty, she is good, she is very intelligent. She lives in a chateau like this, and in the big, white salon there is a grand piano, just like this one. She plays delightfully on summer evenings. There are three or four of us, and the light is dim. Play for me, Fleury! I shall see her. I shall be again in her house; I shall be with her. Play me something which she plays. I will tell you what to play. Do this for me. You have always been obliging. Do it."

We shuddered. The major murmured:

"You may play. There is no hope for him."

Fleury got up and opened the piano, and Urbain said to him, breathlessly:

"Thanks. Come and shake my hand. You are a true friend. Now play the Chopin étude in la—you know it, don't you?"

And in the oppressive silence of this chamber of agony began the strangest and most sinister concert that could be imagined. By the unsteady light of the lantern I saw Fleury's face, very pale and grave. He played as if he were at prayer—as, doubtless, he had never played before in all his life. And little by little the magic of the harmony mastered us. We forgot everything—time, place, reality, death. About that piano we were friends assembled for an intimate reunion.

When the artist had finished, Urbain, from the depths of the shadow, spoke again:

"I see her. She is here—with us. Play again. She knows, as you do, Schumann's 'Papillons.' Don't make a protest, Fleury. Don't tell me that he was a German. He was a pure and sane genius. Let me hear it again, as in Anjou on those summer evenings, before I die. No, don't tell me that I am not going to die. I know it, I feel it. Don't tell me anything, but play"——

And Fleury, trembling, played Schumann's "Papillons." At each pause in the immortal suite of caprices we turned toward our friend. He passed gently into a delirium. We heard him murmur: "Thanks, Fanny; thanks."

And the force of suggestion in that thought was such that I believed that I saw wander by, wrapped in a sort of penumbra, the white, blond figure of a young girl. This lasted until the major, who was watching, bent over the couch, turned brusquely around, laid his hand on the shoulder of the pianist, who was still playing, and said in a hoarse voice:

"Stop! He cannot hear you now."

The brilliant arpeggio broke off abruptly in painful silence. Fleury put his elbows on the keyboard. Overcome by grief, by the music and by insomnia, he broke down in a convulsion of sobs and tears.

FIFTY YEARS OF PROGRESS

What War Did to a Wood in 1864; Battle of the Wilderness
From Brady Collection

What War Does to a Wood in 1917; the Somme Campaign
Photo by Paul Thompson

THE Battle of the Wilderness in the Civil War was considered, at the time, to be a record in the way of intensity and terror of artillery fire. There was a continuous two-day storm of iron hail, and the above photograph, from the Brady collection, was taken to memorialize what was considered to be catastrophic destruction. Grant, the report says, had a superabundance of artillery, which was practically useless, "wrecking its impotent fury upon the defenceless trees." Twigs were snapped, a few branches were lopped off, but the forest as a whole proved an impregnable obstacle to victory on either side. And this with the heaviest and fullest equipment of guns used in any battle of the Civil War. The Wilderness, indeed, was a campaign in itself.

The long range guns and high power explosives of the present war make the historical destruction of the Battle of the Wilderness a tame item of warfare. The above right hand picture is one of the routine incidents of destruction in present-day European battles. The artillery of to-day wrecks a forest in a short time, clearing away trees and underbrush so completely that what remains seems to have been in the centre of a volcanic disaster.

ARE WOMEN PEOPLE?

By Alice Duer Miller

Do Men Want the Vote?

In the 27th Assembly District, Manhattan, on April 12 a special election for Congressman was held; 550 men went to the polls in this momentous crisis to choose their representative—that is about 7 per cent of those who last autumn voted for President.

In 1915, when the suffrage amendment was submitted, the vote against it in the 27th was 2,986—that is to say, that out of almost three thousand men who were not willing to let women vote, at least 2,436 would not take the trouble to vote themselves.

To The Men of the Twenty-Seventh

If the vote's too much for you,
Dear and charming neighbors,
If you cannot struggle through
This and other labors,
If you fear to lose your grace,
If these contests bore you,
If you think a polling place
Too degrading for you,
If you never care to leave
Wife and children doting,
If you find that you achieve
More by tears than voting,
We will ballot for you, men,—
There, there, do not sob so—
But don't shut us out, and then
Slumber on your job so!

Fifty years ago trained nurses were unknown in this country. In 1873 certain ladies of New York decided to establish a school of nursing at Bellevue Hospital. Mrs. Joseph Hobson, who was one of the founders, says in her book, "Recollections of A Happy Life": "Strange to say, doctors were our chief antagonists, the doctors of the Bellevue medical board. Not all of them, by any means, but enough to hamper and hinder and add to our difficulties." The "conservative doctors" were especially trying. "We were ignorant women interfering with what was none of our business" . . . and "they were utterly opposed to our interference." A year later the same board passed a resolution heartily indorsing the work.

In the same way many Englishmen opposed Florence Nightingale; and at the beginning of the present war the offers of service from women doctors were not accepted. Now women in England are being urged to take medical training.

Before women take up any piece of work, which up to that time has been done, well or badly, by men, they are required to expend a great part of their time, energy and money on getting permission to try.

The New York State Woman Suffrage Party is peculiarly fitted to take a house-to-house census of the state's resources. The party has an organization of over 500,000 women, with 6,000 elected officers who have had several years' training in taking house-to-house canvasses of both men and women. The suffragists offer to put this force at work immediately, under proper supervision, and to pay their own expenses.

But at present the government at Albany seems to be inclining to a system which will merely open headquarters where voluntary enrolment may be taken, and which will cost well over a million dollars.

This is too high a price for any state to pay for not having waked up to the fact that its women are efficient.

"His (Mr. Asquith's) conversion to woman suffrage makes him at length the true spokesman of democracy."—The Nation, Lndon, March 17.

Mr. Elihu Root please note.

An anonymous friend points out to us that we omitted one of the best of Mr. Root's pro-suffrage sentences. At the opening of the Constitutional Convention in 1915 he said: "To secure the equal rights of every one of the ten million people of New York State is the end and object of all that we do, and an affirmation of the sacredness of all those equal and inalienable individual rights is the primary maxim of political morality which is to direct our conduct."

In a certain town in Wyoming every individual volunteered for service. Woman suffrage has been destroying the patriotism of Wyoming longer than that of any other state.

The Legislator's Puzzle

(State Senator F. A. Duxbury, according to "The Woman's Journal," said during a debate in the Minnesota Legislature: "It is only the women who have lost their power to attract men who are seeking the vote.")

No, I own I cannot see
What my Mary wants, but me,—
Outside interests, occupation,
Votes-for-women, education—
Asking these I think is rude,
And a base ingratitude.
Why ask anything, when she
Has exclusive right to me?

Sawdust Impressions

By A. R. Fergusson

THE circus isn't really the circus in New York at all. It takes the big top and the sawdust to make it a real circus. And the barker in front of the sideshow tent.

That's where you get the honest-to-goodness, out-and-out, back-to-the-old-town circus. Why, they don't even have a parade here in New York. What, may I ask, in the words of that sterling patriot, Cyrus Corntassel, is a circus without a pee-rade, forming at Fourth and Main streets at 10 a. m. sharp, be sure and come early to get your places on the curbstone, line of march down Main Street to the Post-office, twice around the square and up the turnpike to the fair grounds?

I went up to Madison Square Garden the other evening to renew my early acquaintance with the sawdust ring, to see if I couldn't find something to remind me of the good old times when the audience was more a part of the show than the ringmaster himself. It was hard looking.

Inside the arena the circus was going on. The programmes had the same line of thrilling remarks about the death-daring performance on the flying rings, the marvellous feats of bareback riding in rings Nos. 1, 2 and 3, while the man-monkey and the monkey-man entertained in the intervening spaces, tell them apart and you will be given one five-cent cigar upon application at the box office. But it didn't look the same in reality.

I stood it as long as I could. Every time I started to yell some one in the adjoining box, who looked like a German spy, scowled at me in a threatening manner. It was no use. After a while I gave it up and went out to look for something human.

It was very dark and very quiet down in the basement where they store the animals. Most of them were asleep, there being no small children present to feed them peanuts and tickle their backs with straw when the guards weren't looking. There were a whole line of elephants standing stock still or picking up whiffs of hay with their trunks. Now, that is very unnatural in elephants. Of course they should have been swaying from side to side, and now and again raising their trunks to emit a blood-curdling bellow. Not even a neigh came from the bucking broncos.

I was about to give it up and go home when I bethought me of the freaks. Their room was practically empty. In the corner was a little group in front of which two or three couples stood with gaping mouths. They looked interested. I joined them.

The Fattest Man in the World (that is, one of the fattest—it seems there were two of them in the immediate vicinity) was holding a checker board in his lap, while the Smallest Man in the World, clothed in the Smallest Dress Suit in the World, was sitting opposite him in a very large chair. He was playing the Smallest Game of Checkers in the World. You could tell that from the fact that there were only two of his men left on the board to about ten of his opponent's.

"It's your move," remarked the Fattest Man in the World (that is, one of them) in a perfectly ordinary voice.

"I'll get a king, anyway," returned the Smallest Man in the World, just as you or I would say it, if we were getting beaten to a frazzle at checkers.

It was sheer bravado. In two moves it was all over, and the Fattest Man in the World (one of them, you know) tumbled the board into the lap of the Smallest Man in the World with a laugh that didn't sound any different from the one you use when you rake in a pot on Sunday morning early.

The Smallest Man in the World climbed (I use the word advisedly) down from his perch and the Fattest Man in the World (the twin of the other one) put his feet up on it. Whereupon the Smallest Man in the World pulled the chair out from under them. It was real cute of him. Moreover, I didn't think he could do it. But he did.

Then he jumped around behind the Fattest Man in the World (always remembering the existence of the other one) and tickled his thighs. It was great sport.

By this time Lady Little, who was nearly lost in a blue wrapper which would go about half way around my two-year-old, had come to the rescue. She rose to her full height of eighteen inches beside the knee of the giant, who covered her with an appealing hand.

"You wouldn't let him hurt me, would you?" he pleaded.

"Not on your life," said she.

I don't see how any one could have resisted her, standing there on her doll-like feet cased in tiny silk slippers with her pink cheeks glowing like two holly berries underneath her golden hair, arranged in the latest style. But the Smallest Man in the World refused to notice her. He gave the Fattest Man in the World (who has only one counterpart) a jab in a place he couldn't reach on account of his girth, and sent him plodding in an elephantine way toward the platform where the freaks reside.

"Well, it's about time for us to climb up on the stage," said a deep rumbling voice that nearly knocked the Smallest Colored Lady on Earth off the camp stool at my side. The voice belonged to the Tallest Man in Existence if you don't count the Other One in the circus, equally tall). He rose up from a chair in the corner and lifted Lady Little onto her stand above my head as if he were handling Dresden china. Then every one got up—the Igorote Headhunter, who had been asleep behind the post; the Sword Swallower, whom I had thought one of the onlookers that paid their way in; the Snake Charmer, the Man with the Twelve Foot Beard, the Tattooed Twins, and all the rest of them.

And the crowd that had been watching the show inside began to file out, glancing idly at the row of freaks ranged along the platform. But the show was over for me.

I had found something human at the circus, even in New York.